

# CANADIAN ALLIANCE OF AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH – LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY REGULATORS

## Competency Profile Review: Audiology and Speech – Language Pathology

### Introduction

In recent years, many self – regulated professions in Canada have developed nation – wide competency frameworks. These nationally recognized and applied competency frameworks have aided regulators to harmonize their approaches to many aspects of professions regulation, including compliance with the Agreement on Internal Trade which stipulates the provision for labour mobility.

The Canadian Alliance of Audiology and Speech – Language Pathology Regulators (CAASPR) is working to complete the National Competency – Based Entry – to – Practice Assessment Project. All jurisdictions will inform and align their regulatory practices according to this national process. As a key component, the nation – wide competency frameworks for both professions will be used by regulators across Canada to:

- set registration requirements;
- inform quality assurance programs and set continuing competence requirements;
- process complaints;
- assist in decisions in disciplinary proceedings.

The nation – wide competency frameworks will clearly articulate and reflect current essential competencies for the professions of audiology and speech – language pathology. The frameworks will inform and guide initial professional preparation and professional development across the career.

CAASPR has contracted with Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group (Directions), to conduct the review.

### Project Goals

The objective of this project is to review the existing competency profiles for Audiology (Aud) and Speech – Language Pathology (SLP) and develop a final draft of the interprovincial competency profile that includes entry-to-practice and advanced / seasoned competencies for each profession.

Literature describes a competency as “any measurable or observable knowledge, skill, ability or behavioural characteristic that contributes to successful job performance” (CRA, 2008, p. 3). Occupational analysis studies tend to describe occupations in terms of blocks (the largest division within the analysis that reflects a major function or responsibility in the profession); tasks (specific measurable unit of work which, when completed, results in a product, service or decision); occupation context (parameters of the task); performance context (conditions required to perform the task correctly); subtask (all the duties that constitute a task); supporting technical knowledge, skills and abilities (skills, knowledge and abilities that an individual needs to perform the task successfully); and essential skills (generic skills required for all types of work in various fields) (Construction Sector Council, 2008; Lamoureux & Leeper, 1996; Nolan, 1990; Norton, 1997).

In this project, the focus is on entry – level and advanced competencies (both occupation – specific and general). The entry – to – practice competencies are seen as minimum requirements for entry to the profession and, thus, not an exhaustive compendium of all the knowledge practitioners require. These core competencies provide the foundation upon which

professionals build as they gain experience and develop advanced professional competencies that are required for practice across the career.

To revise and validate the existing competency profiles for audiology (Aud) and speech – language pathology (SLP), Directions will use a comprehensive practice analysis approach involving:

- a review of the existing profiles and related documents and consultations with the subject matter working groups to revise the competency profiles; and
- a validation of the competency profiles with audiology and speech – language pathology professionals in eight jurisdictions (BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, PQ, NB, NL) using an online survey.

## Methodology

Practice analysis is a family of strategies commonly used to develop an accurate understanding of knowledge, skills, attributes, and routines that practitioners need to possess in a profession (Kane, 1997; Corby Soto, 2011). These strategies tend to focus on “minimal though critical competencies” required to provide safe, ethical care and reasonably protect the public from risk of harm (J. Knapp & L. Knapp, 1995, p. 2). A variety of methodologies might be used to perform practice analysis, including functional job analysis (Fine & Wiley, 1971<sup>1</sup>), position analysis questionnaire (McCormick, Mecham, & Jeanneret, 1977), critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954), DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) approach (Norton, 1985), professional practice model (LaDuca, 1994), task inventory questionnaire (Newman, Slaughter, & Taranath, 1999), or a comprehensive practice analysis approach which involves a combination of data collection and analysis strategies (Corby Soto, 2011).

In this project, we will capitalize on the prior work undertaken by CAASPR and use a combination of strategies to identify the changes in Aud / SLP practices and revise the profiles accordingly.

Our approach is based on several key assumptions:

- The competency profiles are to describe a set of common competencies that Aud/ SLP professionals should possess in order to engage in safe and effective practice.
- Profiles identify minimum requirements for each profession and are not an exhaustive list of Aud/ SLP knowledge and practice.
- This project aims to build on and add to the extensive work undertaken by CAASPR and revise the existing profiles when needed to address any changes in professional practice in the last five years.

At the beginning of the project, subject matter experts from each profession will be identified to represent the key relevant stakeholders (I.E.: provincial regulators, CAASPR board members, university faculty, professional advocacy groups, and audiologists and speech language pathologists). CAASPR will select professionals from each jurisdiction who represent different practice settings (i.e.: school, clinical, etc.) and have sufficient experience in the field that would allow them to comment on professional practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Corby Soto (2011)

CAASPR and the subject matter experts will identify documents that describe changes in Aud and SLP practice and competencies that have occurred since 2011 (when the existing draft profiles were developed). Directions will begin by reviewing the draft of the existing Aud and SLP competency profiles and the related documents to identify gaps in current competencies and domains of practice and develop draft competency statements to fill gaps in competencies, as needed. The working groups with subject matter experts (one for each profession) will then be convened. During the working groups, several strategies will be used to review and revise the existing profiles. Participants will be asked to:

- reflect on their practice and describe the competencies, functions, and knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are needed to perform their professional responsibilities;
- discuss the “critical incidents” that might have had a strong positive or negative impact on client/patient outcomes or on the practitioners themselves and identify related practice competencies; and
- review the existing profiles for redundancies in statements, examine the clarity of wording and organizational structure in statements, identify competencies that are irrelevant or out – of – date, identify gaps in the competency profiles, and distinguish between entry – to – practice or advanced / seasoned competencies, and between general or occupation – specific competencies.

Upon completion of the working group meetings, Directions will make revisions to the Aud and SLP competency profiles and e-mail them to the members of the Working Group for final review.

To validate the revised draft competency profiles with a wider population of Aud and SLP professionals in eight jurisdictions (BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, PQ, NB, NL), Directions will develop and conduct an online survey (one for each profession). The survey will list all practice competencies identified and agreed upon in the preceding stage of the project. Participants will be asked to rate each competency in light of four questions:

- Is this an entry-level or advanced competency?
- How often does a new Aud / SLP practitioner perform this task?
- What degree of importance is this competency for entry-to-practice or advanced professionals?
- What is the best method of acquiring this competency?

Additional information that can be collected might include time on task and task difficulty. Demographic information (such as credentials, category of employer, years of practice, gender, etc.) will also be collected. The survey will include closed – ended questions and one open-ended question inviting comments and suggestions about competencies that may have been overlooked.

The survey instrument will be developed in English and French and piloted with approximately 10 individuals from each profession. Upon receipt of the pilot surveys, data will be reviewed to determine whether additional revisions are necessary.

E-mail invitations will be sent to every Aud / SLP practitioner in all provinces and territories through each provincial regulator and with assistance from other groups. Each e-mail will provide information about the study, a URL for accessing the online survey, and the date by which responses should be received. All data collected through the online survey will be anonymous. Once collected, quantitative data will be exported into statistical data analysis software (SPSS, Excel) for analysis. The survey data will be analyzed using descriptive (e.g.,

frequencies, proportions, and cross-tabulations) and inferential (e.g., exploratory factor analysis) statistics.

Upon completion of the online survey, Directions will produce a report describing the Competency Profile for Aud and SLP professions. At that point, the Working Group of subject matter experts will be reconvened to review the results of the survey and make any final revisions to the Aud and SLP competency profiles.

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### **Acknowledgement**

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